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RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2318
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 1325
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0718
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1964
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 6006
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4261
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 2189
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

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SIPDIS

STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA

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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [EFIN](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REPORT - FEBRUARY 27

Leading Stories

1. Two Chilean students were murdered and three others injured in a shooting spree by an emotionally disturbed man in Florida. Dailies also report on the GOC's reaction to the Department of State human rights report.

U.S.-Related News

2. Two students from Chile in the United States under the Work and Travel program are dead and three others are in serious condition after 60 year-old Danny Baker shot them with a rifle in the Miramar Beach community in Florida. Reportedly, in 2008 Baker was denounced to the police for circulating threatening e-mails against politicians. Baker had also talked to his neighbors about a pending "revolution" and inquired about foreign nationals living in the community. Baker has been charged with two counts of homicide. The victims are Nicolas Corp (22) and Racine Balbontin (23), both from Valparaiso. The Foreign Ministry notified the families of the two victims last night (all dailies, 2/27).

Human Rights Report

3. The GOC is "irritated" over the U.S. Department of State Human Rights Report. Although the document values Chile's political stability, respect for civil rights, and freedom of expression, it criticizes police abuse of Mapuche Indians -- specifically citing the death of activist Matias Catrileo in 2008 -- the poor conditions in prisons, and the cases of women who have died as a result of domestic violence (El Mercurio, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record, circ. 129,000, 2/27).

4. Government spokesman Francisco Vidal: "There is no doubt that there are problems in our prisons, because when there are 50,000 inmates in facilities for just 30,000, there is obviously a problem. But we don't have a Guantanamo in Chile" (all dailies, 2/27).

5. On the death of a Mapuche activist, shot in 2008, Vidal underscored that the case is under investigation and that courts of justice are processing those individual responsible for the death (all dailies, 2/27).

6. With regard to women who have been victims of domestic violence, Vidal pointed out, "If there is one government that has strongly battled this kind of crime, it is this administration" (all dailies, 2/27).

¶7. Alejandro Jimenez, Director of the National Prison System (Gendarmeria), said the report shows "ignorance" of health conditions in prisons. He pointed out that the system supports three major hospitals and 89 health units, which last year attended to 860,000 cases including surgeries. Jimenez said 150 men and 13 women are HIV positive, but added that the program to prevent sexually-transmitted diseases has been successful in all prisons (El Mercurio, 2/27).

¶8. National Women's Service (Sernam) Minister Laura Albornoz was highly critical of the report. Albornoz said that what the government has done is to make domestic violence "highly visible," although it has always occurred. She did, however, note that a bill to categorize the murder of women a specific crime ("femicide") has been sitting in Congress since 2007 (El Mercurio, 2/27).

¶9. The Carabineros police said the report's observation about police abuses against the Mapuche was "biased" (El Mercurio, 2/27).

¶10. Government spokesman Vidal questioned the "moral authority" of the United States, particularly for questioning Chile's human rights and given the abuses committed in Guantanamo and by U.S. troops in Iraq. Socialist Party President Camilo Escalona said that information on the situation in prisons and of human rights violations in the United States and of torture committed by U.S. troops, "should advise the Department of State to focus on its own problems." Minister Secretary General to the Government, Jose Antonio Viera-Gallo said the government would take the report into consideration because it was issued by "a friend" (La Nacion, government-owned, editorially independent, circ. 4,200, 2/27).

Economy

¶11. Manufacturers' Association (SOFOPA) figures show a 10% drop in industrial production for January 2009. This is the steepest decline since the Asian crisis in the 1990s, and is primarily due to the decline in demand from foreign markets (El Mercurio, 2/27).

SIMONS